

AUG. 2 946 10c

# *★ Liberty*

BOOK:

## A HAUNTING LOVE STORY

The Pale Blonde of Sands Street

## GERMANY WON THE WAR

By  
WAVERLEY ROOT

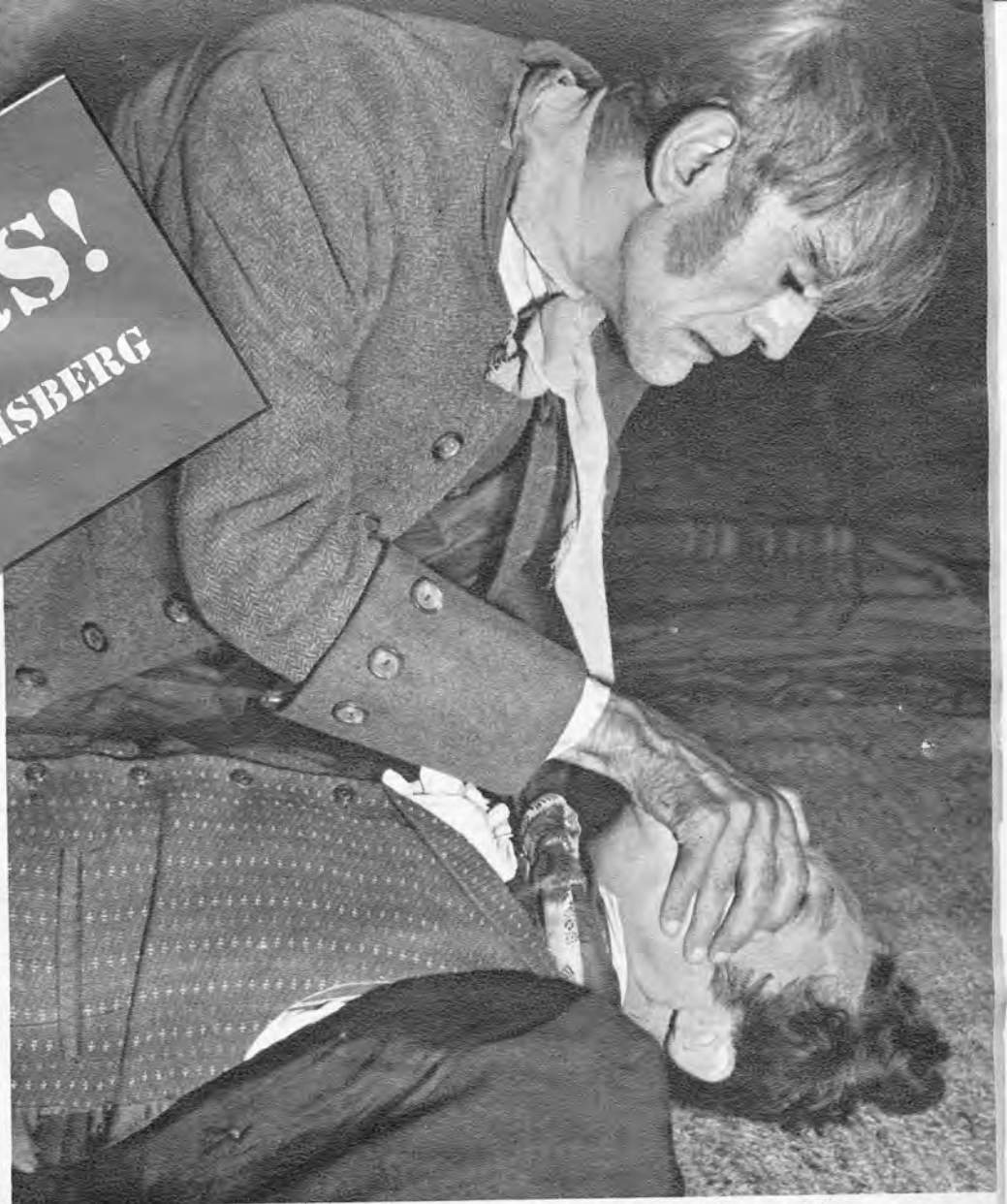


# HORRORS!

BY JOSEPH WECHSBERG

Some 75,000,000 people find amusement in ghouls, vampires, haunted castles, mad scientists, and the like. To please them, Hollywood has developed the fine art of spine-chilling

**A**CHEERFUL, funny gentleman named Val Lewton, one of Hollywood's major horror experts, has presented the nation's approximately 75,000,000 horror-picture fans with such choice terror tidbits as *The Cat People*, *The Curse of the Cat People*, *The Seventh Victim*, *Leopard Man*, *I Walked with a Zombie*, *The Body Snatcher*, *Ghost Ship*, *The Isle of the Dead*, and the Val Lewton, Hollywood's low-budget maker of pictures with a high horror rating.



Boris Karloff at work in a scene from *The Body Snatcher*. The latest Val Lewton chiller-diller based on Robert Louis Stevenson's story concerning a murderous grave robber.

recently released *Bedlam*. His pictures cost around \$100,000 and gross up to a million. Horror has become Big Business.

Val Lewton heads what historians of the Film Age will call School of Gentle Horror, as distinguished from the School of Satanic Horror, which produced *Frankenstein*, *The Mummy*, *Dracula*, *The Mad Ghoul*, *The Wolf Man*. His disciples sneer at the sledge-hammer approach to horror and scorn frightful make-up, werewolves, blood-sucking vampires, torture chambers, and mad scientists.

His horror assembly line is greased with good spirits. Some time ago an RKO executive passing by Val Lewton's office heard Homeric laughter.

"What's going on in there?" the executive asked. "They prepping a new comedy for Leon Errol?"

"No," said the secretary. "Mr. Lewton's working on *The Body Snatcher*."

*The Body Snatcher* is based on a story by Robert Louis Stevenson, "set against the anatomy rooms in Edinburgh's medical school in 1832,

and the mysterious hide-out of the city's leading grave robber." It involves a famous surgeon who has to deal with a murderous grave robber in order to get the corpses which he needs for dissection and study. The surgeon's servant (played by Bela "Dracula" Lugosi) is murdered by the grave robber (played by Boris "Frankenstein" Karloff). Then the surgeon has to kill Karloff, who dies only after he's whispered, "You won't get rid of me." Later Karloff's face reappears on the body of a buried old woman, and the terrified surgeon dies a horrible death. Get the idea?

"We had a hell of a time making the picture," Lewton remembers. "It was great fun."

Lewton, like most other bogeymen, loves a good joke. Not long ago he came upon the word "yaddo" in a story by that great horror writer, Edgar Allan Poe, who used the word to describe the dappled effect of sunlight and shadow on the ground of a forest. Lewton made sure that the word was not in Webster's Inter-



national Dictionary, and promptly wrote into his next script, "The yaddo creeps slowly through the forest." This created quite a stir among the prop and the research departments. After calling up everybody else in town, the research people contacted the Selznick studio, where Lewton had worked formerly as story editor and head of research. Finally the Selznick people in turn called up Lewton in great excitement.

"We're having an unusual request. Can you tell us what a yaddo is?"

Another time there was an unimpressible executive at RKO—there is one in every studio—who would say after each preview of one of Lewton's chiller-dillers, "It's swell, Val. But it ain't horror."

"People could have collapsed with fright right and left," Lewton remembers. "It was never horror to him."

When they previewed *Bedlam*, Lewton sat behind the unexcitable executive, waiting for a scene in which a man walks through a long, dark corridor. Suddenly a white hand comes out of the darkness, reaching—for its victim. At that moment Lewton lightly touched the executive's shoulder. The man emitted a scream that was heard all over the lot.

FOR years Universal's monsters, mummies, and mad ghouls were dominating the horror market. Universal chiller-dillers had a pseudo-scientific premise, the action was often laid in the "legendary" past, there was a believable hero and a phony monster, and in the end the hero would meet with a terrible death and have a resurrection. One of the problems was to make the hero die a horrifying death. In the different Frankenstein pictures he was crushed by falling timbers, was blown to bits, was thrown into molten lava, fell into a burning inferno.

Dyed-in-the-wool horror fans have their definite likes. For instance, they refuse Alfred Hitchcock's mysteries because those are "too real." They have a mania for weird, visionary, unreal goings-on. In *The Wolf Man*, an innocent, gentle fellow is changed "by the ghostly moonlight" into a four-legged beast. *Dracula* sleeps in his coffin all day and becomes a vampire at night. In *The Mad Ghoul*, a kind of "ancient" poison gas causes a state of "death in life" in which head and body function normally but the mind remains without a will of its own. In *Man-Made Monster*, a man "absorbs" electricity in the electric chair by wearing a rubber suit, but "bleeds to death" when he tears his suit on a barbed wire and the "current leaks out."

Nothing of that sort ever happens in a "Lewton," as the trade has come to call his specific blend of suspense and horror. The idea is to convey horror by suggestion, indicating that such things could perhaps happen.

Back in 1931, the first of the Frankenstein pictures gave the horror addicts well-timed, carefully calculated shudders at the rate of one each forty-five seconds. You couldn't do that today. Horror audiences have grown up. They like to laugh at themselves when the mood of a tense scene is broken by a false alarm. In one of Lewton's pictures there is a tense, frightful scene in a dark barn. The audience expects something terrible to happen. Suddenly a horse begins to whinny. The audience relaxes happily and breaks into laughter.

But laughter may become the deadly sin of horror pictures when it comes at a wrong moment. A couple of skeptical people can ruin the effect of a well-conceived horror scene. Lewton and his associates go to a great deal of trouble to keep people from bursting into untimely laughter. They break a tense scene by showing its impact in the wide-open eyes of a frightened child, which is never funny. Or they switch to a beautiful exterior—mountains, trees, the stormy sea. Even hard-

\*\*\*\*\*★\*\*\*\*\*

A harassed supervisor handling emergency calls during the telephone strike a few months ago could not figure this one:

"I want to call my mother at Mrs. Kelly's house," a little boy said.

"What is the nature of the emergency?" the supervisor asked.

"I'm scared," the youngster answered.

The call was put through.—N. Y. Times.

\*\*\*\*\*

boiled audiences can't help being impressed by nature.

Val Lewton's horror pictures open in a leisurely way, lulling the audience into a false sense of security. Then, when people least expect it, comes a sudden shock. Lewton calls that shock a "bus." He's used the term ever since *The Cat People*, where in one scene a man is shown walking in a dark street. Suddenly a bus roars by, and the audience, already worked up into a high state of tension, lets out a terrific shriek.

To find ever new "buses," or horror spots, is a horror expert's most difficult problem. Horror spots must be well planned and there should be no more than four or five in a picture. Most of them are caused by the fundamental fears: sudden sound, wild animals, darkness. The horror addicts will populate the darkness with more horrors than all the horror writers in Hollywood could think of.

Boris Karloff, the Grand Old Man of Horror, says, "In every horror production the audience is the best actor. In the play, *The Criminal Code*. I was shown committing a murder on the stage. There are many ways of showing a murder; it was decided that I would face backstage while I was committing the murder in the dark. All the audience could

see of me was my vicious upholstered back, dramatically spotlighted, swaying back and forth. It created more horror in the imagination of the audience than my face would ever have caused."

Such subtlety has paid off in Lewton's pictures. So does the element of sincerity which he is trying to inject. There are moving love stories, realistic settings. And when foreign locales are used, the natives are never made to appear ridiculous.

Of late Lewton has put a slight "message" into his pictures. After a troubled story conference, he received a memo from one of his bosses that read, "No message, please. P. S. Only permissible message: Death Is Good."

"He was the guy who once offered a helpful suggestion when we got stuck with a story," Lewton remembers. "He said, 'Why don't you create a ghoul by the perfectly natural process of premature burial?'"

Horror pictures depend on technical perfection, startling sound and photography effects. The photography of chiller-dillers is done by the best low-key specialists among Hollywood's cameramen. Sequences in graveyards, dark laboratories, voodoo dancing places, torture chambers, insane asylums are not easy to shoot. The camera has to seek out black spaces. Surprising light sources must be found. Brilliant black and white contrasts, dramatic side lights, silhouette effects, weird shadows, fog sequences, people walking through dark rooms with candles in their hands are the stuff that horror is made of.

THE studio's sound department plays an equally important part. Muffled footsteps, overturned chairs, strange whispers, subtly eerie sounds create a lot of spine chilling. At Universal it took them many months of research to find that the hair-raising yowl emitted by the *Wolf Man* had to be a sound cocktail of one third genuine wolf, one third coyote plus dog barking, with a bitter dash of nails scratching on a glass plate. Sneering laughter, the cries of loonies, creaking doors and rusty hinges are, of course, dull routine.

To break a neck acoustically, the soundmen use stalks of celery. For bones to be broken they take carrots. Hands are cut off by using a cabbage head and a cleaver. One of the most horrifying effects—that of stabbing out an eye—is produced by a hot iron that is jabbed into a ripe grapefruit, with the juice running out.

At Universal they have a famed make-up man, Jack Pierce, who has probably been responsible for more man-made monsters than any other living man, in Hollywood or elsewhere. It took Pierce four months to create Frankenstein's monster. For the monster's backbone he used a steel rod. Toughest problem of all was to "open the monster's head." Pierce finally did it by replacing

(Continued on page 52)

"we shall be better placed to conquer in 25 years than we were in 1939. The interval of 25 years is the limit of the interval, for that is the time which will be required for Russia to repair the destruction we have visited on her."

That is the program the Germans set for themselves: to achieve a position after the war stronger than that of their neighbors so that some time within the next twenty-five years they can attack again. The objectives which they considered necessary to give them that position have been attained or are being attained: a larger population, more food, stronger industrial potentiality, an organized underground to maintain German unity, a psychological atmosphere that will maintain Allied disunity.

So far, the program seems to have been successful.

**B**UT, you may ask, has not the unforeseen advent of the atomic bomb so altered the military situation as to outdate Germany's plans? The answer is "No," for two reasons. The first is that Germany's conceptions were broad enough to stand up in spite of the introduction of new and better weapons. The second is that the atomic bomb was not entirely unforeseen. For Germany was working on the atomic bomb even before the last war began. And in 1945, just before the end of the war, her scientists were at last on the right track. Facing defeat, the Nazis from that moment included in their plans the possible use of the atomic bomb after the war to reverse its verdict. They failed to take into account only one thing: they had no inkling of the fact that the United States had already wrested its secret from the atom.

But we may be virtually certain that Germans somewhere are still working to pierce the secret of the bomb. Once they have it, the balance in weapons will not merely be equalized: the Germans will have the advantage. For the importance of striking the first blow in atomic warfare gives the edge to the aggressor, who will not be deterred by any considerations of morality or humanity from hitting by surprise and treacherously. The appearance of the atomic bomb, therefore, has not nullified Germany's successes.

Dare we say at this moment, then, that Germany did not win this war? The final answer may have to wait for the next one, for which German preparations began two years before the last war ended. That next campaign she expects to win. If she does, one thing is certain: At its end, she will not permit any conditions to exist which will make it possible to doubt, as we may doubt today, who was the victor. A German victory will be complete and unquestioned. We know the kind of peace a victorious Germany would have made. It would have been inexorable.

THE END

## HORRORS!

Continued from Page 32

the top of the monster's skull with a larger, overlapping skull. This new skull was propped up with cotton and rubber. Pierce then caused the monster's eyelids to half-droop over the eyes, made a hole in one cheek and badly burned the other one. All over the monster's body the "flesh" had to be sprayed with grayish-blue color. The shoulders and the chest had to be padded. The coat sleeves were cut short, which gave the monster the appearance of a gorilla.

"Poor Mr. Karloff had to get up every morning before dawn," Pierce remembers. "It took me over five hours to put on the make-up. Most of the time Karloff would be sound asleep while I was working on him."

Karloff had to go through even more suffering when he played The Mummy, which was the story "of an ancient Egyptian come to life." Pierce needed more than eight hours to turn suave, mild-mannered Mr. Karloff of Information, Please fame into the Mummy. Karloff had to be completely bandaged, taped under the arms and along the legs. The bandages were singed with a blowtorch. Hot glue and varnish had to be spread all over his body until he had the "authentic" dark-brown color of a mummy many thousand years old.

"When I got out of my sarcophagus and freed myself from the bandages, there were weird crackling sounds," Karloff says. "To tell you the truth, I was a little frightened by myself."

Horror can be a great many things, from the psychological thriller to the strictly fantastic monster tale. The witch scene in Disney's Snow White and the whale in Pinocchio were nothing but horror. On the realistic end of the horrors is a memorable scene in The Spiral Staircase in

which Dorothy McGuire plays a mute girl menaced by a murderer. She tries to telephone for help and goes through agonies, praying that her fear will enable her to call for help, and the audience suffers with her. The method of audience identification with fear has been successfully used by Lewton, particularly in The Cat People.

Val (Vladimir) Lewton, who was born in Yalta in 1904, when the place wasn't internationally famous, came to America at the age of six. He's been a reporter, short-story writer, wrote novels, radio serials, publicity, came to Hollywood twelve years ago, hopes to divide his future between Grade A pictures and more masterpieces of suspense. He left RKO a few weeks ago to go with Paramount.

Lewton's grisly epics have been produced on modest B-picture budgets. He and Mark Robson, who directed Lewton's last five pictures, had to rely more on their wits than on money in devising horror sets.

**F**OR Bedlam, a story of the infamous St. Mary's of Bethlehem Asylum in eighteenth-century London, they used the interior of a church which was last seen in The Bells of St. Mary's. In Isle of the Dead they needed a set for a battlefield which would cost at least \$2,000. There was no budget for it. So they looked up some old paintings by Francisco Goya, one of the greatest horror experts of them all. They studied Goya's conception of a battlefield heaped with corpses.

"We hired twenty extras for ten dollars a day each to play the corpses," says Robson. "But there was still the problem of placing the corpses so that they would convey the impression of a battlefield, and we had to follow Goya. And there was another scene in which we had to show how the corpses were being carried away on carts. We borrowed that one from a picture that appeared in the Paris L'Illustration in 1913. People wrote in saying that it was the weirdest battlefield they had ever seen. It cost the company less than two hundred dollars."

The first great horror picture was The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, with Werner Kraus and Conrad Veidt. It was made twenty-five years ago and gave a psychological study of a lunatic murderer's mind. Later, Lon Chaney became world-famous in The Phantom of the Opera and The Hunchback of Notre Dame. The story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, another horror classic, was enacted successively by John Barrymore, Fredric March, and Spencer Tracy. Among today's horror stars are Boris Karloff, Bela Lugosi, Claude Rains, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Basil Rathbone, and Lon Chaney, Jr.

And as you read this, Hollywood's horror experts are thinking up new ways to make your hair stand on end and/or your blood run in reverse, whichever you prefer.

THE END



"Bring me that box of old keys in the attic!"

LIBERTY